

New Orleans Legal Community and Habitat for Humanity Team Up for the 2008 Bench and Bar Project
By Michael DePetrillo

"Best wishes on your new home!"

"Good luck!"

"A house built with love!"

"May you have the happiest of times in your new home."

These are but a few of the well wishes scrawled on the inside beams of a home on Eagle Street in New Orleans. These messages and dozens of others like them represent the expressions of countless volunteers from the New Orleans legal community and other surrounding areas who have worked tirelessly since March to build a Habitat for Humanity home. The project is affectionately known as the Bench and Bar Project.

Over the course of nine weeks, the Bench and Bar Project brought together practitioners, judges, law students, and other members of the legal community each Friday and Saturday to build a

home for Cherie LeBlanc, an inspiring woman who has become a friend to all of us who spent any time volunteering. Nearly everyone is aware of the tremendous impact the New Orleans area's Habitat for Humanity efforts is having on the lives of many residents in the community. The Bench and Bar Project was the legal community's opportunity to play a role.

The camaraderie and affection that developed as a result of the passion of the Bench and Bar Project's volunteers is difficult to put into words. On any given Friday or Saturday morning it was quite common to see Chief Judge Ginger Berrigan of the Eastern District and countless other judges working side by side with attorneys from large and small firms coming from New Orleans to Baton Rouge.

Cherie was always with us and was a constant source of energy and inspiration. What made this year's project even more unique was that Cherie maintained a blog with information and pictures on the progress of her

home. Volunteers could stay in touch with Cherie and watch her home near completion long after their volunteer day—and they did.

In one of her blog postings, Cherie made a statement expressing her appreciation, "But I am grateful for Friday. I am grateful for all of you who come out to give of yourselves. ... You all give me courage." In allowing the New Orleans legal community to hammer nails and put siding up on her home, Cherie has also given us courage and an extraordinary opportunity to experience something the volunteers of the 2008 Bench and Bar Project will not forget.

To read Cherie's blog and see pictures of her home being built through the dedication of the New Orleans area legal community, please visit [yetmore minutiae.blogspot.com](http://yetmoreminutiae.blogspot.com). **TFL**

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Honors and Awards

The American Bar Association's Tort Trial and Insurance Practice Section will present the 2008 Robert B. McKay Law Professor Award to **Ronald A. Cass**, dean emeritus of Boston University School of Law. The annual award recognizes law professors who are committed to the advancement of justice, scholarship, and the legal profession in the fields of tort and insurance law. ... Washington, D.C., attorney **Jack Olender**, of the malpractice law firm Jack H. Olender & Associates, PC, was named by the *Legal Times* as one of "The 90 Greatest Washington Lawyers of the Last 30 Years." He is the only medical malpractice/personal injury lawyer named to this list. ... **Patricia M. Wald**, whose legal service includes representing the United States on the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, will receive the American Bar Association Medal for 2008. The medal, the highest honor the ABA bestows, is awarded only in years in which a single individual has

"rendered exceptionally distinguished service to the cause of American jurisprudence." Wald is the third woman to receive the medal.

Practitioners' News

C. Britton Bonner has joined the Foley, Ala., office of Armbrrecht Jackson LLP as partner. ... **Marc S. Raspanti**, a named partner in the law firm of Pietragallo Gordon Alfano Bosick & Raspanti LLP, co-authored an article entitled "Why Do They Do It?: The Motives, Mores, and Character of White Collar Criminals," which was published in the *St. John's Law Review*. ... **Clifford A. Rieders**, a trial attorney in Williamsport, Pa., has written a new edition of his book, *Pennsylvania Medical Malpractice: Law & Forms*, published by the Pennsylvania Association for Justice (formerly Pennsylvania Trial Lawyers Association).

Obituary

Hon. William Strasser of Bradley Beach, N.J., died on June 12. Judge Strasser served 27 years as an immi-

gration judge in the Executive Office for Immigration Review and served in numerous positions with the U.S. Department of Justice prior to his appointment. He was a senior partner in the law firm of Strasser, Asatrian, Asatrian & Syme LLP. Judge Strasser has been an active member of the FBA for 30 years and has held many leadership positions, such as Senior Lawyers Division chair, Immigration Law Section chair, Central Jersey Shore Chapter president, New Jersey Chapter president, vice president for the Third Circuit, and National Council member. The judge was an Army veteran and a member of the Coast Guard Reserve. He is survived by his wife of 33 years, Fanie; his children, Frederick, Abraham, Daniel, Michael, and Sarah; and his brothers Edward and Allen. **TFL**

Hearsay is compiled by Sarah Kemerling, FBA communications coordinator. Send your information to Hearsay, The Federal Lawyer, 1220 N. Fillmore, Ste. 444, Arlington, VA 22201.